

Weekly Market Bulletin

State of New Hampshire
John H. Lynch
Governor

Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food
Stephen H. Taylor
Commissioner

Vol. 85

Wednesday, September 27, 2006

No. 30



From Your Commissioner...

Family Rallies for Cancer-Stricken Boscawen Farmer

A completely unexpected diagnosis of liver cancer, a complex surgery at Mass General, days in the ICU and the prospect of a long, slow recovery at home—all that piled on top of the demands of running a large dairy farm just as the corn harvest begins.

For the Crete family of Boscawen it's been a time to rally around and make sure the operation keeps its momentum up. The cows are getting milked, the feeding gets done like clockwork, the chopper and the trucks are running full-tilt getting the corn cut.

Bruce Crete, 51, went for a routine physical in midsummer. He had had no symptoms of any illness, but when word came back he was facing a dire medical emergency he was soon in the care of oncologists and surgeons in Boston. A major portion of his liver was removed in a lengthy operation and after two weeks recovering in the hospital he came home a few days ago to begin a long convalescence.

A brother, Edgar "Pete" Crete Jr., has taken a leave of absence from his job as a driver for Ross Express, a motor freight company, and he's been handling Sunday milking duty and running the tractor packing corn in the bunker silos. Son Adam gave up a semester at UNH to stay home and handle feeding chores and help with the harvest.

The patriarch of the Crete clan, Edgar Crete Sr., 75, climbs into the cab of the big self-propelled John Deere chopper every morning and spearheads the harvest of the 500-plus acres of silage corn the farm grows on its rich Merrimack River bottom land. And a good crew of hired hands carries on with their regular duties.

Pete Crete says the operation could use a few drivers occasionally to keep the five corn hauling trucks humming from dawn to dusk, but at the weekend the chopping was moving forward right on schedule.

"You never expect a kick in the head like this, but we're making it go," says Bruce's wife Martha, sounding cheerful despite the past two months of anguish.

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The Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) program has paid New Hampshire dairy producers \$6,448,712 since its inception in 2002. For the 11 Northeastern states the total is \$521 million, or 23 percent of the total of \$2.3 billion the federal government has spent in payments. New York and Pennsylvania have been by far the biggest recipients with \$214 million and \$205 million respectively.

MILC favors states with a greater percentage of smaller producers through its limit of 2.4 million pounds of annual production eligible for coverage. Thus Wisconsin captured 20 percent of payments while making 11 percent of the nation's milk supply.

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Don't write off the sport of horse pulling as a refuge for rich people just yet. Tania Durgin Johns of Charlestown writes that folks of modest means can still develop good teams and be competitive in the ring.

Yes, horse pulling has changed as Peter Messer of New London was quoted in this space a couple of weeks ago, but she says proper exercise, training and care are still the key factors to success in the game.

"Let's not discourage the younger generation from getting involved in something they can enjoy with their entire family. If you go to just about any horse pull in New England you will see several family members working together to get a pair of horses ready to go in the ring for a class," Johns says.

"No matter how much was paid for a pair of horses the families are spending time together enjoying a pastime the same as in generations past, just in the present."

Steve Taylor, Commissioner